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INTERNATIONAL ASSEMBLY OF WOMEN, COPENHAGEN, 21-24

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FOREWORD

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THE INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S ASSEMBLY

The following is a translation of a "contribution from Esther Brinch and a reply from Nina Anderson" in the newspaper Aktuelt, Copenhagen April 1, 1960 also published in Land og Folk on the same date.

Under the heading "Misuse of International Jubilee" the social democratic member of the Folketing Nina Andersen has taken upon herself, in Aktuelt for March 29 "to try to lift the fog" concerning the arrangement that has been planned for the celebration in Copenhagen in April of the 50 year anniversary of the International Women's Day.

And then Nina Andersen begins in earnest to spread a fog which, as is the way of fogs, hangs over a mushy and stinking swamp.

Presumably her attack originated on the basis of discussions in a general meeting (according to "Information") in Danske Kvinders Nationalraad (National Council of Danish Women). At least "Information" reports that the National Council of Danish Women, according to its president, Else Merete Ross, did not wish to take part in the international women's assembly because they had not been invited to take part.

I should therefore like to ask both "Aktuelt" and "Information" in the interest of truth to tell their readers that the initiating committee invited both the National Council and Dansk Kvindesamfund (Danish Women's Federation) and a woman member of each of the political parties to take part in the meeting of the initiating committee in Copenhagen December 5 and 6, where the holding of the assembly was decided. On my table lies a reply, dated December 4, from Council of Danish Women, in which the National Council through its acting president Kren Sabroe makes known that they cannot let themselves be represented. As reason for this is given the fact that they are affiliated with the international women's council, and they are of the opinion that they cannot participate in international organizations beyond this. - Nevertheless, the initiating committee has later repeatedly written both to the National Council of Danish Women and to the Danish Women's Federation (which asked for questionnaires for active participation in the preparatory work) and also to Social-democratic Women, and it has given information about the

preparatory work and asked for assistance in the form of informational material both about the work of the organizations in question and about the history of the women's rights movement in general, as the first item on the program of the women's assembly is a tribute to the pioneers of the women's movement.

The initiating committee twice called press conferences. The first conference, on December 7, was attended by representatives of several papers, which also published modest notices about the assembly. At the second conference, in February, the press was conspicuous by its absence.

I do not own stock in any of the many independent papers published in Denmark, and I am therefore not master of what the press will publish. I doubt that "Aktuelt" would have accepted an article by me about the factual circumstances about the women's assembly, such as I have explained there in detail in the bulletin of Denmark's Democratic Women's Federation for March 1960, which gives an entirely different picture for example of the presidium, than does the completely distorted picture Nina Andersen has set up. If she read "Vi Kvinder" (We Women) the editors of which most kindly have made that paper available to me, she would also have noticed that this paper in its February number had an article, a long one, considering the modest circumstances of this paper, about Clara Zetkin. I have from several foreign papers received requests to write about the origin of the international women's day, and I have in my replies explicitly called attention to the fact that "according to reports representatives from 17 countries participated in the women's conference in 1910, to which Clara Zetkin as international secretary for the socialist women had sent out invitations "with socialist greetings." - I have likewise written about the fact that the women's day was initiated by a resolution at the said conference in 1910.

In other words there remains only one foggy question without flesh and blood among Nina Andersen's premisses, which conclude with "that is the sort of thing one rightly may call misuse." She made this charge without making the slight effort of finding out about the question by a telephone call to Anna Westergaard or myself. She could have done this without having either any complete or incomplete "anonymity conceal her". We have no reason to conceal anything. It was on our motion that the initiating committee on December 5 and 6 decided that there should be invited to the women's assembly in Copenhagen in April, women from the entire world without any discrimination of whatever kind. That is the clean flag we are flying, and this principle is in accordance with the Declaration of Human Rights. Perhaps that is exactly why it has won acclaim

everywhere from people of good will, so that we now have registrations from 800 women from more than 10 countries. With great expectations they are coming to Copenhagen to this women's rights assembly, where we will try to help one another by exchanging experiences and discussing the future prospects for women in all the world. We will not participate in Nina Andersen's witch hunt.

Yes, it is true that the wife of the Millionaire Cyrus Eaton, Mrs. Anna K. Eaton, who is a very active member of the presidium for preparation for the women's assembly has made a great contribution towards holding it. The same is true of another member of the presidium, the sister of the king of Cambodia. But it is also true that their contribution is not intended to pay for the trip of the delegates from Indonesia. If "Information" keeps up its curiosity concerning who will provide the money for the travel of the Indonesian women, it will presumably cost only a telephone call to president Sukarno, whose wife according to reports will participate, or to foreign minister Subandrio, whose wife is a member of the presidium. They will surely be able to tell how they get the travel money - unless they find the questions too impertinent.

If Nina Andersen and Elsa Marete Ross do not themselves wish to participate in the women's assembly in April - and we in the initiating committee are people who do not urge anyone - then we will at least recommend that they refrain from sour interference.

Social democratic women on the 7th of March this year celebrated - contrary to custom - the international women's day with a meeting in Rømersgade (Rømer Street) but admission was only, as far as I know, for people with social democratic membership cards. With us there is admission for all, including social democrats - and even if the great preparatory work has now been done without them, they may gladly have the honor for the arrangement. Because that is where the too small shoe is pinching them.

Esther Brinch

The above does not give me occasion for many remarks. The very long reply contains nothing which can shake the facts I have listed, but rather underscores them. As I wrote, the official invitation contained the words: "Fifty years ago women from several countries gathered in Copenhagen ... etc." Mrs. Brinch has an erroneous report from the general meeting of the Council of Danish Women. Mrs. Else Merete Ross did not

say that the Danish National Council had not received any invitation, but that the International Women's Council was not invited.

To the remarks about the honor and small shoes, only this: Social democratic women do not wish to get the honor for an arrangement prepared by a communist front organization such as the Women's International Democratic Federation.

Nina Andersen

THE WOMEN'S ASSEMBLY IN COPENHAGEN COMMUNIST DOMINATED

(Following is a partial translation of a newspaper article by Eleanor Roosevelt in Information, Copenhagen, April 16, 1960)

Seeks a meeting arranged by non-communist organizations to which one would invite the communists.

The arrangers of the women's assembly soon to be held in Copenhagen have tried in vain to get Mrs. Eleanor Roosevelt to come to Copenhagen.

Mrs. Roosevelt has commented on the assembly in her syndicated newspaper column and has given information permission to publish the commentary, which in its entirety is as follows.

(Translator's note: the rest of the article is a translation into Danish of one of Mrs. Roosevelt's columns)

OPEN LETTER TO ELEANOR ROOSEVELT

(Following is a translation of a newspaper article by Esther Brinch in Information, Copenhagen, April 14, 1960)

The initiating committee for the holding of an international women's assembly in Copenhagen in April invited you to join the initiating committee. To this you replied in a friendly way, that you did not wish to participate in anything where you would be only a name.

Personally I found this absolutely in order: but I was surprized that our well meant and polite appeal to you had the result that you publicly speak up against us and give erroneous information, which you must know has the effect of warning against participation in the planned women's assembly in Copenhagen. I should have thought that would be far below your dignity.

To us you did not mention any of the doubts you now have expressed in your column (in New York Times?) reprinted in the Danish paper Information.

On the background of letters you have received from people who do not belong to the initiating committee, you are forming an erroneous picture of a matter which you could have had fully explained by enquiry at the proper place.

What you would be happy to live to see, you write according to Information, is "A meeting to which the non-communist organizations of the free world issue the invitations and where Soviet representatives would be welcomed."

That is exactly the idea of the initiating committee. This is what we have done.

It is true that we are not organizations, but we belong to a number of different organizations and a glance at the list of the initiating committee will show you and others that your overbearing characterization of the participants as "well meaning" women, perid, is very far from correct. It is true that certain prominent women from your country are unable to participate in our women's rights assembly because, as they write to us, their passports have been taken from them - in open conflict with the well intentioned declaration of human rights.

You indicate a reproach to the participants in a meeting last December because their appeal "is noteworthy by not containing anything which not every one of us could accept as an expression of our own deeply felt desire for peace." - For God's sake, what is it you really are asking for? - Anyway, the program of our assembly is solely concerned with women's rights, even if our desire for peace is just as deeply felt as yours.

Our gracious letter to you was sent to you, it is true, because we - and perhaps especially we who experienced the brutality of Hitler's Germany - always have had respect for the name Roosevelt. The letter was signed by Denmark's Grand Old Lady of the women's movement, for 13 years a member of the upper chamber of the Danish parliament, as a representative of a liberal party to which I also belong. The name of my co-signer is internationally known. We have been in contrary wind before, but we have not previously, in company with such a select flock of prominent women from the entire world, been subject to the experience of being judged as fools.

With friendly greetings, Esther Brinch.

THE COMMUNISTS ARE BEHIND THE WELL MEANING

(Following is a translation of a newspaper article by Peter Dalhoff in Aktuelt, Copenhagen, April 22, 1960)

Women's International Democratic Federation stands behind the international women's assembly which yesterday opened in Idraetshuset (the house of sports) in Copenhagen. But who stands behind the International Federation?

"Kvindernes demokratiske Verensforbund" - Women's International Democratic Federation - is one of the 12 great communist front organizations, which have the purpose of enlisting well meaning but gullible people in communist propaganda campaigns.

Program: WIDF - which has its headquarters on Unter den Linden in East Berlin - gives as its purpose to work against war, suppression and poverty, to defend the rights of women and children, to secure democracy and the people's national independence and to work for peace, disarmament and banning of nuclear weapons.

Real Purpose: In practice however, WIDF has entirely different purposes, which are not mentioned in the program. WIDF's program is plainly evident from the policies the organization has pursued since its inception in Paris in November 1945. It is shown that WIDF in big matters and small has rallied behind the various communist propaganda campaigns, and the WIDF not at any point has deviated from the official foreign policy of the Soviet Union. It is for example revealing that WIDF excluded the Yugoslavs when Stalin broke with Tito in 1948, but readmitted them in April 1956 after a reconciliation had taken place between Khrushchev and Tito.

It is likewise revealing WIDF always points out that the conditions of women and children in the Soviet Union and other communist countries are something near the ideal, while in the "capitalist" countries and to an even higher degree in the colonies, there is suppression and economic exploitation of women and children. The reason for the poor conditions in the non-communist countries is said to be "war preparations" which eat up the money that should be used to improve living conditions. But about the military expenditures in the communist countries, never a word is said.

WIDF also supports the propaganda campaign of the communist world peace council, by pointing out the dangers to which women and children are exposed as a result of radio-activity from nuclear weapons testing. But the criticism is always directed against British and American testing and never against the Soviet Union.

Propaganda campaigns:

Among the actions WIDF have carried out is the sending of a women's commission to North Korea for the purpose of "investigating the cruelties committed by the aggressors". WIDF took it for granted in this case that it was the South Koreans and the Americans who attacked North Korea and not the other way around. The commission after its visit sent out a report entitled "We Accuse" where the UN troops are accused of encroachments on the rights of Korean women and children.

Later WIDF joined the campaign of the world peace council against the alleged American bacteriological warfare in Korea, and in May 1952 WIDF's vice president Monica Felton declared that she had seen "clear proof" that American troops spread deadly bacteria among North Korean and Chinese.

In recent times WIDF has with great energy taken part in the campaign against the colonial system and has sent greetings to the women of Malaya, Kenya, Cyprus and North Africa in order to encourage them in "the fight against imperialism".

Organization: The congress is the highest authority in WIDF, and it is to be called every fourth year. Since the beginning in 1945 however it has been called only three times, namely in 1948 in Budapest, 1953 in Copenhagen and 1958 in Vienna.

The congress consists of representatives for the affiliated women's organizations and some individual members.

The directorate consists of representatives of affiliated organizations and is according to the statutes supposed to be called in at least once a year. So far it has been called only every other year.

WIDF's bureau consists of the president, vice president, general secretary and members appointed by the directorate.

Membership and Finances: Every women's organization can be admitted to WIDF. In exceptional cases single individuals can be admitted directly.

The membership number is astonishingly high, which is due to the fact that women's organizations behind the iron curtain are automatically admitted to WIDF. In 1945 the membership figure was 80 million, but it has since increased to "more than 200 million in 80 countries."

Officially the work of WIDF is financed by membership fees from the affiliated women's organizations. But as the accounts are not made public, nothing definite is known about the finances of the federation.

One thing is certain: There are very great expenses connected with the bureau work in East Berlin, the sending out of four journals and the holding of meetings. For example, the delegates from affiliated women's organizations in Asia and Africa are not going to pay a cent for their trip to Copenhagen or their stay here during the assembly. WIDF pays the whole bill and in addition invites the participants to round trips in Eastern Europe after the assembly.

Outside Contacts: As mentioned, the federation is in close cooperation with the world peace council. Several of the members of the directorate of WIDF are encountered again in the leadership of the peace council. The federation also collaborates with two other international front organizations, namely the International Youth Federation and the communist trade union international.

In April 1954 the status of WIDF as "Advisory organization" to UN's economic and social commission was cancelled, and repeated appeals for reinstatement have been rejected.

WIDF has throughout its lifetime made great efforts to establish collaboration with other international women's organizations, but with small success.

The purpose in seeking collaboration with other organizations is simply to throw a conciliatory respectable light on the propaganda activities of WIDF, and to convince non-communists of the responsible character of the federation. A collaboration would also secure for WIDF an influence within other women's organizations, especially with reference to peace and anticolonial campaigns.

Peter Dalhoff

Legend under cartoon: Friendship! Friendship!

USA AUTHORITIES FORBID NEGRO WOMAN TO TRAVEL HERE

(Following is a translation of a newspaper article in Land og Folk, Copenhagen, April 22, 1960)

Stirring appeal concerning South Africa to the participants in the women's assembly.

Among the many greetings to the women's assembly there was yesterday especially one, that attracted great attention. It came from a member of one of the organizations of American Negro women, Shirley Graham, who was not able to participate in the assembly herself, because the American authorities have confiscated her passport and forbidden her to make the trip.

Her letter is a call for all women to stand together in the fight to secure human rights for all races. Shirley Graham writes for example about the situation in South Africa, that black men, women and children are driven from their miserable huts to work in mines, ditches and fields, any consideration for the women is disregarded. Death is a release for the women.

- I appeal to the international women's assembly, that it plead with all governments to make their influence felt towards the South African republic, whose policy is a threat to freedom. South Africa must be condemned, not only in words but through action. Economic sanctions, boycott of all South African goods are peaceful means. Other methods will come to attention during the further discussion of the question.

In concluding the letter Shirley Graham states that she would have liked to bring the greetings herself to the assembly, but the American Department of State has forbidden her to go. "We have our Johannesburg in the Southern States," she writes.

"The black people in the world desire peace. We demand freedom and an opportunity to work. Freedom to go about without fear in our own countries."

THE WOMEN OF AFRICA AND THE EAST AGAINST POLYGAMY AND THE VEIL

(Following is a translation of a newspaper article in Land og Folk, Copenhagen, April 25, 1960)

The participants in the women's assembly have widely different problems.

The discussions among women from all the world at the international women's assembly, which ended yesterday in Copenhagen, have fully demonstrated how widely different problems the women have to contend with. We have asked some of the delegates to the assembly about the social position of women in their countries.

West Africa

- There is no doubt in our minds about which field we first of all must put our effort into for the liberation of women, says the secretary general of the West African women's union, Mrs. Fatou Cisse, from Guinea, who is a member of the initiating committee for the women's assembly.

In Africa polygamy, i.e. the practice of having several wives, is still very prevalent, and the work for having this abolished by law is made difficult the the fact that many young women in West Africa do not yet understand that it will be to their advantage if this form of marriage is abolished.

- How about the position of women in the labor market?

We have not yet arrived at a situation, where we have to fight for equal rights for women there, because only very few have taken work in the factories. By far the larger part of West African women still stay at home, but we have gradually arrived at the point where in the African universities one may meet women students, as for example at the university in Dakar.

Mrs. Cisse finally declared that by bringing the women together about internal problems, their interest can be awakened for the international women's movement and for collaboration among all peoples.

Indonesia

In spite of 350 years of colonial rule under the Netherlands, the women have already during the four years Indonesia has existed as a fully independent state, succeeded in obtaining equal rights with men.

- It exists not only on paper but in reality, asserts Mrs. Utami Saryadarma from Jakarta. In such an important field as the labor market we have for example managed to carry out the principle of equal pay for equal work. Only with regard to marriage legislation is it necessary constantly to work for an improvement, so that women will be better protected.

This complete change in the status of woman in Indonesia is due to a great extent to the tireless work they did in the fight for the independence of the country, whereby they achieved general recognition and respect, says Mrs. Saryadarma.

But all these steps forward do not in any way mean that the women's organizations have completed their mission. In 350 years generations of Indonesian women have lived under colonialism. We understand thoroughly what it means to suffer and to be unable to build up our country. At the same time we have been able to appreciate how far we have come in a brief stretch of years, where we have been able to dedicate ourselves in peace to the building up of the country. So that this can continue, it is however a necessity that peace be preserved in the world, and we hope that the international women's assembly will mean a significant strengthening of the peace effort, Mrs. Saryadarma concludes.

Pakistan

One of the most picturesque figures at the women's assembly is Dr. Khaditah Ferozuddai from Lahore, Pakistan, who plays an important part in her country's women's movement.

Dr. Ferozuddai, whose country only 13 years ago obtained self government after the separation from India, can also report about great progress for the women.

Even if far from all yet care to go with uncovered faces, there are today thousands of women who have put aside the veil, she says. This liberation has penetrated into the most backward areas, but of course it does not preclude that Pakistan's women normally are dressed in costumes that conceal the entire person, apart from the face.

Also as far as marriage is concerned, the young woman herself may decide whom she wishes to marry, and marriages are now certified by public authorities in contrast to previous arrangements, where only oral agreements were entered into, says Dr. Ferozuddai.

Legends under pictures:

Left: The secretary general of the West African women's union, Fatou Cisse

Right: Behind the veil is concealed Dr. Khaditah Ferozuddai from Pakistan.

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END